

VZCZCXRO7883
OO RUEHPT
DE RUEHBY #0779 2330602
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 210602Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1953
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0293
RUEHBN/AMCONSUL MELBOURNE PRIORITY 6622
RUEHPT/AMCONSUL PERTH PRIORITY 4887
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY PRIORITY 4874
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM PRIORITY
RHMFSS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 000779

NOFORN
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2019
TAGS: AF MCAP MOPS PREL
SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN DEFENSE CHIEF'S CONCERNs OVER
MCCHRYSTAL REPORT

Classified By: CHARGE DANIEL A. CLUNE. REASON 1.4 (C) and (D)

¶1. (C/NF) Chief of Australian Defense Force Air Chief Marshall Angus Houston told Charge on August 20 that he planned to call Admiral Mullen, General Petraeus and General McChrystal in the next few days to explain that it will be important that General McChrystal's upcoming assessment on the situation in Afghanistan not inadvertently undermine Prime Minister Rudd's attempts to maintain public support for Australia's participation in the conflict.

¶2. (C/NF) Houston explained that the Prime Minister has maintained support for the war effort by defining Australia's task as securing Oruzgan province and training the Afghan Fourth Brigade, currently stationed there. Rudd is concerned that a new strategy might result in various brigades being rotated through Oruzgan province, thus turning what can be defined as a finite task into one with an indefinite term. Houston said Australia was willing to take entire responsibility for training the Fourth Brigade, including manning the seven Operational and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) required in the province. He intends to ask New Zealand to provide half of one of the OMLTs.

¶3. (C/NF) Houston expressed continuing concern over who will take over leadership in Oruzgan after the departure of the Dutch in 2010, and again expressed his preference for the U.S. assuming that role. Charge expressed great U.S. appreciation for Australia's contribution to the effort in Afghanistan, promised to convey his concerns to Admiral Mullen, General Petraeus and General McChrystal and assured him that we would take care to avoid steps that might undermine the Prime Minister's efforts to maintain public support for the war effort.

¶4. (C/NF) In response to Charge's inquiry regarding the August 20 announcement by Rudd and New Zealand Prime Minister Key that the two countries will explore the possibility of forming a combined "ANZAC" military contingent for future joint, Houston explained that Australia and New Zealand forces already operate together in Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands, and that the ANZAC contingent would simply provide a structure for future operations of that kind.
CLUNE